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THE ROLE OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS IN THE TEACHING OF FRENCH AND SPANISH.

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PUB DATE OCT 66

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.24 6P.

DESCRIPTORS- *APPLIED LINGUISTICS, *AUDIOLINGUAL METHODS, *FRENCH, *LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION, *SPANISH, AUDIOLINGUAL SKILLS, AUDITORY DISCRIMINATION, SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING, STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS, INTERFERENCE (LANGUAGE LEARNING), SYNCHRONIC LINGUISTICS, CONTRASTIVE LINGUISTICS, DESCRIPTIVE LINGUISTICS,

APPLIED LINGUISTICS CAN ASSIST TEACHERS OF FRENCH AND SPANISH IN DETECTING ERRORS IN PITCH, INTONATION, RHYTHM, WORD COMBINATION, AND SOUND REPRODUCTION, AS WELL AS IN ENABLING THEM TO DO A PROFESSIONAL JOB OF TEACHING STUDENTS MORE ACCURATE SPEECH HABITS. AS THE TEACHER CONCENTRATES ON THE SOUND OF THE LANGUAGE, HE MUST VALUE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CONCEPTS IN DESCRIPTIVE LINGUISTICS. IN SO DOING, HE CAN HIGHLIGHT SOUNDS THAT CREATE PROBLEMS FOR ENGLISH SPEAKERS IN THE PRONUNCIATION DRILLING OF MINIMAL PAIRS AND CAN EMPHASIZE THE DIFFERENCES IN THE NATIVE AND TARGET LANGUAGES IN STRESSING PITCH AND INTONATION. FURTHERMORE, BY LEARNING TO PRODUCE FIRST THE ORAL SOUNDS OF THE NEW LANGUAGE, THE STUDENT CAN BE MORE EASILY TAUGHT THE WRITTEN FORMS WITHOUT HAVING THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE MOTHER TONGUE INTERFERE. EVEN IN THE AREAS OF GRAMMAR AND LANGUAGE STRUCTURE, APPLIED LINGUISTICS IS INVALUABLE IN AIDING THE TEACHER TO PAY MORE ATTENTION TO LANGUAGE DIFFERENCES IN CLASSROOM DRILLING AND IN THE LATER MANIPULATION OF BASIC STRUCTURES IN THE LANGUAGE LABORATORY. THIS ARTICLE APPEARED IN THE "ILLINOIS JOURNAL OF EDUCATION," VOLUME 58, NUMBER 6, OCTOBER 1966, PAGES 7-10. (AB)

ED013553

ILLINOIS JOURNAL OF EDUCATION
Volume 58, Number 6, October 1966.

THE ROLE OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS IN THE TEACHING OF SPANISH AND FRENCH

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Speaking and listening comprehension have become a vital part of the teaching of Spanish and French. Teachers of these languages are now devoting themselves to intensive study of the sound system of these languages in order to help their students speak more accurately. These teachers have had to renew their own knowledge, reexamine their own learning, and add additional ideas and theories to their practices. To this end NDEA (Title III, National Defense Education Act) institutes came into being. Applied linguistics is becoming one of the requisite courses in such institutes and in certain teacher-training institutions. What, then, is the value of applied linguistics to the teacher of Spanish or French?

First, it helps the native or near-native speaker identify the sounds and utterances that he is already able to produce accurately. Secondly, it enables him to reproduce these sounds for students in a way that students can comprehend and imitate. Thirdly, it helps him identify the problems of Spanish and French for the English speaking student. This science has also been invaluable in helping the nonnative teacher improve his own command of the foreign language; errors in pitch, intonation, rhythm, word combinations, and reproduction of sound become more apparent to him.

The term linguistics means many things to many people. Historical linguistics has a place in the language classroom and has proven itself to be of value in explaining why certain phenomena exist. For example:

Spanish (Preterite) cantaste (Imperfect) cantabas (Present Perfect) has cantado. *French* (Passé Simple) tu chantas (Imperfect) tu chantais (Passé Composé) tu as chanté. *Latin* (Perfect) cantavisti (Imperfect) cantabas (Vulgar Latin) cantatus habes. One can readily see the evolution of the preterite and the passé simple from the same Latin form, the perfect. It is interesting to note that in Spanish this tense has become one of the dominant past tenses in conversation whereas in French it has been supplanted by the passé composé and, as the passé simple, this tense has become a form that appears primarily in written form. Such understanding of the history and development of the language is of great consequence and interest to the language teacher, and, if used as salt and pepper, can on occasion "season" the advanced level courses. Students enjoy this type of explanation.

However, this is not the branch of linguistics to which the teacher of Spanish and French devotes himself, valuable and interesting though it may be. Descriptive linguistics established itself as a science "by concentrating upon the sounds uttered by a living speaker, and for the most part, by leaving aside gesture, writing, meaning, and past history." It showed the pit-

falls of going from the written word to the spoken word in the initial phases of language study. Consider:

Spanish	¿Dónde está Enrique?	¿Dónde come Roberto?
French	En plein air.	En plein jour.

In each of the preceding sentences the spoken utterance is the result of the juxtaposition of the given words in the sentence. The last syllable of *dónde* is combined with the first syllable of *está* in speaking, and the last syllable of *está* forms a type of dipthong with *Enrique*; the combinations occur because of the initial vowel of *dónde* and *está*. In the first French phrase, the *n* of plein loses its nasal quality before the following vowel. This shows that one cannot accept a word as the unit of speech. Even consonants vary their sounds according to their position in the word or the sentence.

Descriptive linguistics uses certain terminology which is of interest to the teacher:

1. the phone—any sound produced by the voice that is audible to the ear. The study of phones, how they are produced and perceived, is the domain of phonetics, and this science is also indispensable to the descriptive linguist.

2. the phoneme—the smallest unit of speech that can be used by a speaker of a particular language. Phonemes differ in various languages. Not all sounds make a difference to a native speaker. For example, the initial *k* sounds in *key* and *cool* are different, and yet no two words in English are differentiated by this sound. On the other hand, *kit* and *kid* are different because of the sound of *t* and *d*. This difference in sound is not always easily perceived by nonspeakers of English. In Spanish *mismo* the *s* is sometimes similar to an *s* in English, sometimes it is like a *z*. This does not change the meaning; however, *rice* and *rise* are differentiated by this very sound. Phonemes then become important in the study of language since they identify the sounds that are vital to the native speaker.

3. minimal pairs—words which are differentiated by only one building stone or phoneme. For example, *wide* and *white* are minimal pairs in English; French *boue* and *bu* are minimal pairs. Now the difficulty comes for the American student in that French *u* (*bu*) does not exist in English, but the student can approximate the sound of *ou* in *boue* easily; he thus tends to make both sounds the same, but this is totally unacceptable to the native. Minimal pairs have also been useful in distinguishing sounds which are similar to those of English but which still differ from their English counterparts. English *lay* and Spanish *le* can be compared as can Spanish *sí* and English *see*; they cannot, nevertheless, be equated. In both Spanish and French the vowels are tense and clipped, whereas in English *lay* and *see* have a diphthongal quality.

4. the morpheme—the minimum unit of speech that can convey meaning. It may, like a word or syllable, have one *phone* or cluster of phones, yet it is not the same as a word or syllable. *Soon* is a word, a syllable and a morpheme. If *-er* is added, there is a new word and a new concept, but *er* in itself is not a word, yet it is a morpheme. Mor-

phemes may be bound or free; if they are free, they can appear in speech by themselves; if they are bound, they cannot. Hence, *soon* is free, and *er* is bound.

Now it becomes apparent that such concepts as those listed above can be of great value to the *teacher*. Students need to know how to produce sounds, not all the linguistic terminology that pertains thereto. The teacher shows the students minimal pairs and drills the pronunciation of:

rue	roue
bu	boue
musique	mouche

He picks those sounds which cause difficulty for the speaker of English and these he drills.

Pitch and intonation which once were learned only by osmosis have become targets for intensive study. The student's own language, English, has also been studied so that differences between it and the target language can be highlighted. English is a language of stress. Meaning and importance are determined by stress. Consider this sentence:

That man is not going to buy my house.

One can change the meaning of this sentence by stressing *that, not, my,* or *buy*. Likewise a native French professor delighted his class by stating on a tape that French pronunciation or stress was like that of *mission guns,* rat-a-tat-tat . . . Only moments later did the class realize that he meant *machine guns*. . . He had easily redistributed the stress of the word.

The above ideas have dealt primarily with auditory discrimination. The pupil must first hear the sounds that distinguish Spanish from English or French from English. Then he must learn to reproduce those sounds accurately. If the above has been accomplished, the next step need not be a difficult one. A student is taught to spell the sound that he can now reproduce accurately. He now *hears* the difference in sound between English and French; he can reproduce th sound in French, and he then learns to represent the *new* sound in writing.

It is this principle taken from the study of linguistics that leads the audio-lingual teacher of Spanish or French to the conclusion that the student should spend time learning to produce accurately the new sounds of the new language. The sounds are taught to him in sentences that *mean* something. Then when the student can speak the sound, the teacher shows him how to reproduce it in written form. Thus the student does not carry his English speech habits into French and Spanish to such a great extent. He does not try to pronounce written Spanish or French by the same rules with which he pronounces English. His mother tongue does not interfere to such an extent with his learning of the new language.

Applied linguistics also helps the teacher to organize the grammar or structure of the language into patterns, and to accent and drill those patterns of the language which are different from English. For example,

English	I *am sleepy.*
Spanish	Tengo sueño.
French	J'ai sommeil.

Here the teacher's task becomes one of installing a new concept into the student's mind. Familiarity and comprehension are not sufficient. He must make this new concept a part of him. Thus the language teacher drills this concept in the classroom with dialogues, questions and answers; the student then goes to the language laboratory and with a taped drill he practices the pattern many times until his response becomes automatic. He also practices manipulation of the structure so that he can use it in new and different circumstances.

Thus one can see that applied linguistics focuses the teacher's attention on the differences of sound, the rise and fall of the language, and the uniqueness of the structure of the foreign tongue. But in all of this the emphasis is on the living language, language in context, and language as it is spoken today. This science has helped teachers to understand, teach, and test speaking more effectively, and it may in the future help us to produce those linguists which our country so desperately needs.

REFERENCES

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